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**CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
2 December 1952**

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File

VENEZUELAN OPPOSITION CLAIMS VICTORY IN CONSTITUENT ELECTION

A news black-out makes it impossible to substantiate the Republican Democratic Union (URD) claim that it has defeated the government in the Constituent Assembly election, but at the same time indicates that the governing Junta is deeply disturbed by the early returns.

An opposition victory could probably be ascribed to several little-discussed factors including the unprecedented honesty of the election, participation by the membership of the outlawed Democratic Action Party and recent government brutalities, and defections which may have undermined morale in the Junta camp.

While the Junta may have initiated the black-out merely to prevent the fragmentary and adverse urban returns from inflaming the tense political situation, the American Embassy reports that foreign correspondents give only the 'old-guard state of Tachira to the government, and rumors are circulating that the Junta is using the black-out to attempt "deals" with both the URD and the other legal opposition party, Copei.

The government has been determined to retain power, and will undoubtedly make continued efforts to do so. However, any deals would depend on continued control of the army by Col. Perez Jimenez, the "strong man," which a 1 December Embassy report places in doubt. A fabricated revolt, or the "discovery" of Communist influence in the election, cannot be ruled out as pretext for a palace coup if the defeat proves real and attempted deals fail.

The URD, the third-ranking party, is moderate left-wing, but is headed by the unprincipled Jovito Villalba. Villalba's willingness to deal with Perez may well be modified by his reported working agreement with the outlawed Democratic Action Party, which can be assumed to have supplied the bulk of his votes. Although he has Communist connections, these will probably not be a factor in his current maneuvering.

Villalba has recently retracted his campaign allusions to nationalization of the oil and steel industries and has professed friendship for the United States.

State Dept. review completed

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*jm***VENEZUELAN ARMED FORCES MOVE TO RETAIN POLITICAL CONTROL**

Col. Perez Jimenez, strong man of the four-year Junta of Government, has in effect proclaimed himself provisional president of Venezuela. On 2 December, when a little more than half of the expected two million votes had been counted, the Junta declared its stewardship at an end and presented a collective resignation to the six-man military committee which had delegated governing powers to the Junta after the 1948 military revolt. Perez and the other military member of the three-man Junta are members of the committee, which immediately appointed Perez provisional president.

Usually astute in matters of government, the ruling group has proved unexpectedly inept in managing its first major political engagement and has now been forced to fall back on transparent and unwelcome emergency measures.

The change in official leadership was accompanied by an announcement that the pro-government Electoral Front had overtaken the Republican Democratic Union's early two-to-one lead in the Constituent Assembly election and was ahead by about 95,000 votes. The American Embassy, convinced that the count is being falsified, reports that the government's "new strategy" calls for an appearance of limited but decisive victory in the final count and working agreements with the two legal opposition parties.

While the army's new mandate to Perez increases the possibility that opposition leaders may feel forced to negotiate, and for the moment virtually rules out a successful revolt or even a successful general strike, continued unrest and possibly violence can be expected.

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